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Georgia Southern's Taylor Thompson Brings Golf and Faith to Kenya

The senior took the mission trip during the winter break.

Elisabeth Dichiara



Women's Golf | 1/30/2017 12:26:00 PM

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Georgia Southern University golf team member [Taylor Thompson](#) never thought she would end up traveling half way across the world on a nine-day mission trip to Kenya. Through the help of the College Golf Fellowship and Athletes in Action, she was able to have an experience she would never forget.

Taylor's desire to travel to Kenya first started three years ago after attending a golf retreat in Fort

Worth, Texas, through the College Golf Fellowship. The retreat was held at Gerina and Martin Piller's house, who are both professional golfers that play for the LPGA and PGA tours. Her good friend, Alexis Belton, who came with her to the retreat, recently came back from Kenya and brought the trip to Taylor's attention.

At first, Thompson dismissed the idea, thinking Kenya was too far to travel. However, after some convincing, Thompson began to seriously consider the idea of traveling abroad.

"Throughout the next three years I kept feeling a tug on my heart that I should go," she said. "So I prayed about it, and this year, I just decided to sign up."



It took Taylor a little over two months to raise \$4,500. She did so by selling t-shirts and sending out support letters to people she knows. "Luckily, there were people in the Statesboro area that wanted to help out, and I actually got the last thousand dollars on the day of the deadline."

Thompson was in a mission group of 17 people. "There was no one else on the trip from Georgia Southern. One of my friends from University of North Carolina went, so that was the only person I knew," she said. "But by the end of it, we were all really good friends."

Their trip started with mission work in the city of Kibera, visiting a local elementary school called Soweto. "It was just what you see in magazines pretty much, dirt floors, aluminum walls, and a small room that only held about 20 kids," Thompson said. "We were there for about three hours, and we all got really sick from the dust. These kids go there everyday and deal with those conditions, and they don't think anything of it."

Kibera is an African slum that is only eight by two kilometers and is home to about 1.5 million people. It's an extremely dangerous place for women in particular, as Taylor was informed that it is unsafe for women to walk anywhere by themselves.

The group visited the site of a future all-girls home that was located across the street from a high school. They learned that the girls who will be housed there would stay at this home in order to be able to walk safely to and from school without fear of being abducted or raped. The building will cost \$60,000 U.S. dollars and will house 100 girls.

During the trip, they also spent time playing golf with the Kenyans. "We would just talk to them about their faith. The biggest thing was teaching people that you could be a Christian and play golf at the same time," Taylor said.

She explained that a lot of people in Kenya see golf as the devil's sport because it can be known

to involve gambling, drinking, and staying out late on the course. "It was a really big deal for us to say, 'yes you can be a Christian and a golfer.' In fact, you can use golf to glorify God."

The mission group held golf clinics for the Kenyans and got the chance to help them with their golf games. They even left equipment behind so the locals could continue to practice the sport.



Taylor also found that the golf courses in Kenya were not at all what she is used to. Most had red dust around them and were packed down with dead grass. "It was actually good practice for me because I had to be creative. I know when I play another course that doesn't seem so great I can be like, 'hey I played this in Africa!'" she joked. "But they weren't really bad courses, they were just different."

Even though she's not in Kenya anymore, Taylor is still looking for ways to help the country she now holds so close to her heart.

"I would love for the golf team to somehow contribute to the girls home they're building in Kibera. Any little bit helps, and my coach and I talked about what we could do to support that."

As for what is next in Thompson's life, she plans on setting her sights towards graduation in May but has not ruled out any future trips back to Kenya.

"While I was in Kenya, everyone kept asking me if I was coming back next year, and I wasn't sure I'd ever be able to come back," she explained. "But since I've been home I've realized how great the trip really was. I don't know when, but I would definitely like to go back."

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PLAYERS MENTIONED

Taylor Thompson

Senior

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